



SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

**GOVERNOR JANET NAPOLITANO
REMARKS, AS PREPARED**

**JUNE 14, 2003
SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA**



President Locatelli, members of the faculty, honored guests, friends and families of the graduates, and members of the Santa Clara University Class of 2003:

It is my honor and pleasure to be your commencement speaker. Every time I return to Santa Clara, I'm reminded about the story of the red telephone.

My family has strong ties to Santa Clara University that go back more than half a century. I graduated in 1979 and was selected by my classmates to be the student commencement speaker, so today is, in Yogi Berra's words, "déjà vu all over again."

My father attended Santa Clara in the 1940s when it still fielded a football team. He played quarterback, and even helped lead the Broncos to victory in the Orange Bowl.

He, of course, earned his doctorate the old fashioned way, then went on to help found the University of New Mexico medical school.

Dad and I have been working hard to put our degrees to good use, and I am humbled that you would see fit to award me an honorary doctorate.

While my doctorate is honorary, the degree each of you is receiving today is very much the product of years of hard work. Congratulations to each of you.

The occasion of this talk has led me to look back at the twenty-four years since my own graduation, and to ponder the true value of a Santa Clara education.

What did I get when I walked out of here? What has stayed with me?

On the most basic level, a Santa Clara education is of financial value. Most of you (or your parents) have paid more than \$150,000 to be wearing those robes today.

But your families have often sacrificed more than money for you to be here. They've given you moral support and encouragement and have shared your ups and downs during the past four years.

And as you've shared your experiences through phone calls, letters, emails, and visits home, your loved ones have watched you mature as students and individuals. They understand the value of the money invested.

Another way to value a Santa Clara education is economic. In other words, in your lifetime, the financial cost of a Santa Clara education will be refunded to you, many times over.

These days, college graduates on average make nearly \$20,000 more annually than those who only receive high school diplomas. Over a lifetime of work, this equals well over half a million dollars.



And that's just for the average college graduates. Color me biased, but I count Santa Clara graduates as a cut above average. Don't you agree?

A college diploma in and of itself is enough to give you a leg up. And as many of you enter the current job market, you are armed with a great asset – a degree from Santa Clara.

This is surely good news for those of you who will soon have to make your first student loan payment...

But the value of a Santa Clara education is more than just financial and economic. There is personal value, too – a less tangible, yet somehow more real value than dollars and cents.

However, unlike the financial benefits to your education, no one but you can give your experience personal meaning. It is your job to reflect on the experiences you've had here, glean what you can from them, and move forward with all the lessons and good memories you've accrued.

From living away from home to meeting others from different backgrounds, I will always remember Santa Clara as a time of firsts.

While at Santa Clara,

- I embarked on my first road trip – five of us in a Pinto hell bent for Disneyland. Mister Toad's Wild Ride had nothing on our first road trip to Anaheim...
- I went to my first boat dance. This was a new experience for me, having grown up in New Mexico. We had plenty of dances in Albuquerque – but boats? Not so much.
- I remember pulling my first all-nighter. It was to complete a term paper for honors international relations. It was my first, but sadly, not my last. Law school awaited on the horizon.
- I remember many of the little things, like tasting my first daiquiri. This one was made with fresh strawberries from the San Jose Farmer's Market, which is probably what made it so memorable.
- And I remain moved by some of the life-changing events, like spending my first time abroad, as a student in London.
- And then there are those twisted stories that we all have, like when I spent Halloween night in my freshmen year in the Mission Gardens. Hey – I just wanted to see if they really were haunted...



Each of you has your own list of firsts and bests that you take away from here. Believe me, they are going to stay with you forever. You will remember them fondly, and they may even grow to mythic proportions as you retell them to friends and family members over the years.

But this is not where the value of your Santa Clara experience ends. It goes without saying that you cannot leave SCU without appreciating the intellectual value of a Santa Clara education.

At SCU I learned how to read critically – whether assessing a research paper, comparing two opposing treatments of the same subject, or analyzing a poem by John Donne.

With the help of faculty and fellow students, I learned the value of discussion for its own sake – and with great energy, I debated everything from Plato's Republic to the moral questions surrounding the latest advances in biological research.

I learned how to write coherently, and to explore new ideas, new cultures, and new traditions.

I also took great pleasure in asking impertinent questions, like why did Simon de Beauvoir put up with Jean Paul Sartre anyway?

More importantly, I learned how to combine different disciplines so that, when looking at the war in Iraq, for example, I have some inkling of the history involved, the economics, the foreign policy, and its possible effects on our future.

Finally, I learned to recognize the limits of my own knowledge, because what we admit we don't know is often more important than what it is clear that we do know.

All of these valuable attributes to the Santa Clara education combine to illustrate my ultimate point: The most important value of a Santa Clara education is the realization that intellect is incomplete without character.

In fact, I'd venture to say that the sense of ethics you take from here is even more significant than the academics you've absorbed.

SCU has given you a sense of ethics that will enable you to make decisions beyond your own self-interest, compel you to participate in the affairs of your community, and demand that you hold yourselves to strict standards of honesty.

This is part of the tradition that is so well upheld here. Santa Clara offers this magnificent experience not just to help you find a better job or demand a higher salary. Santa Clara provides this education as a means to empower you to create a more just society



The faculty here have challenged you to understand and appreciate people of different traditions and faiths.

They have dared you to oppose intolerance of any kind – to speak for a viewpoint, even in the face of popular opposition.

As Nancy Astor once said, “Real education should educate us out of self into something far finer; into a selflessness which links us with all humanity.”

What she’s talking about here is something much higher than simple knowledge – it is the fusion of education and ethics that empowers you to benefit humanity. This, more than anything else, is what I hope you’ve gained from Santa Clara.

Putting all of this together – the cost of a Santa Clara education, the economic head start it gives you, the personal memories you’ll always have, the intellectual growth you’ve experienced, and the ethical principles you’ve absorbed, it is quite clear to me that the value of a Santa Clara education is values.

You leave here with one of the best educations – and I use education in the fullest sense of the word – available anywhere in the world. And that, my friends, means that a Santa Clara education is an experience of infinite value.

Congratulations on your achievement today.